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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

THE HOME OF THE BLIZZARD. By SIR DOUGLAS MAWSON. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1915.

Although Sir Douglas Mawson's detailed story of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911-1914 is not the epic of a single great achievement, its appeal is none the less fundamentally strong. Now that both Poles have been attained, it may be that expeditions to the Far North and to the Far South have lost something of a certain glamour that they once possessed—a glamour as of tremendous and enormously dignified “sporting events.” But it by no means follows from this that they have been deprived of their true incentives. On the contrary, the real motives that drive men beyond the far horizons and into the forbidding hinterlands of the world must be henceforth all the more clearly understood. One cannot read *The Home of the Blizzard* without entering, perhaps more deeply than ever before, into the true spirit of the lust for exploration—a spirit in which the human craving for excitement mingles with scientific ardor, and with faith. To the recurrent question, “What is the use of it all?” the book as a whole gives a more than usually convincing answer. This answer is well summed up by Dr. A. L. McLean in his “Foreword” to Sir Douglas Mawson's narrative. “The aim of geographical exploration,” writes Dr. McLean, “has in these days interfused with the passion for truth. . . . Science and exploration have never been at variance; rather the desire for the pure elements of natural revelation lay at the source of that unquenchable power, ‘the love of adventure.’”

Moreover, now that men have actually set foot upon the magic points where the meridians meet, popular attention may well be centered upon aspects of circumpolar exploration that are really more fascinating to the imagination than was even the lure of the Farthest North or of the Farthest South. Chief among these is the problem of the great Antarctic Continent—a lofty expanse of ice-clad land, approaching in extent the combined areas of Australia and Europe, of which the limits and characteristics have been but vaguely ascertained. The most desolate and savage of all the regions of the earth, the land in which the lowest mean temperature and the highest average wind velocity prevail, blizzard-swept Antarctica holds out a magnificent challenge not only to man's love of adventure, but to his desire for

knowledge. To map the ultimate bounds of this unique continent, to learn all the scientific truth that it may have to tell, to know its *grandeurs*—these are aims not to be despised. In truth, the imagination of the world may well turn to the South in somewhat the same way in which the imagination of Europe turned to the West when America was but a vague outline on the map. Not that there are *El Dorados* to be found in Antarctica—yet no one knows what may be the ultimate value of its secrets. "Science," Sir Douglas reminds us, "is a homogeneous whole. If we ignore the facts contained in one part of the world, surely we are hampering scientific advance. It is obvious to every one that, given only a fraction of the pieces, it is a much more difficult task to put together a jig-saw puzzle and obtain an idea of the finished pattern than were all the pieces at hand. The pieces of the jig-saw puzzle are the data of science."

It was the least-known portion of the Antarctic coast which the Australasian Expedition chose for its sphere of work. At the eastern extremity of the Australian Quadrant the outlines of the Ross Sea, as well as the coast west-northwest of Cape Adare as far as Cape North, had been charted by Ross; and the knowledge gained by him had been amplified by seven later expeditions. Shackleton had extended his observations some forty miles beyond Cape North; and Scott, in 1910, had found two patches of land—Oates Land—lying still farther to the west. But the whole stretch of two thousand miles of coast, lying between the most westerly point sighted by Scott and the land just outside the Australian Quadrant on the west, which was discovered by Drygalski in 1902, lay practically unexplored. Voyages thither had been few; such observations as had been made there were superficial and in many cases inexact, as the records abundantly show.

The ship *Aurora*, carrying the expedition, left Hobart for the South on December 2, 1911. A base was first established on Macquarie Island—a busy station in the days of the early sealers, but now almost wholly neglected. Here a party of five men was left, whose duty it was during a stay unexpectedly prolonged from one year to two, to map the island, to examine its geology, to study its interesting flora and fauna (hitherto but partially described), and to make meteorological observations. Pushing on through storm and ice, the *Aurora* landed a party on an undiscovered portion of the Antarctic Continent. Fifteen hundred miles to the west another party was landed. The *Aurora* then returned to Hobart to refit and to carry out oceanographical investigations, during the year 1912, in the waters south of Australia and New Zealand. In December, 1912, the ship returned to the Antarctic to relieve the two parties which had wintered there. Ten of the fifteen men who formed the party at the main base and the whole of the western party were taken on board and carried to Hobart. Sir Douglas, however, who was absent on a sledging trip across King George V. Land—a trip on which his two companions lost

their lives—was so late in returning that the ship (according to an arrangement previously agreed upon) sailed without him, leaving five men to carry out a search for the missing party. These five, then, with Sir Douglas, remained in Antarctica for a second winter. It was not until the summer of 1913 that the long-enduring explorers were picked up by the *Aurora*, and it was not until February of the following year that they reached Adelaide after a two-months cruise of observation amid the ice.

Such, in barest outline, is the story of the expedition. Its accomplishment in the way of geographical results alone is somewhat impressive. From both the main base and the western base numerous exploring parties were sent out. Journeys were made over the sea ice and on the coastal and upland plateau in regions hitherto unsurveyed. The land was mapped in through 33 degrees of longitude, 27 degrees of which were covered by sledging parties. Wireless telegraphy was used in the fixation of a fundamental meridian in Adelie Land. Besides this, Maquarie Island was mapped—no small accomplishment, though it lies, strictly speaking, outside the sphere of Antarctic work. And in the collection of scientific data other than geographical, the expedition was extraordinarily diligent and successful.

As compared with other stories of polar exploration, Sir Douglas's narrative has its own peculiar appeal. Few tales of the sort give one so vivid an impression of weird and picturesque surroundings. Few enable the reader to feel so fully the illusion of being actually present on the scene of action. Always the narrator's powers of description prove adequate to the occasion, yet never is there any excess of rhetoric or undue interposition of words between the reader's mind and the bare, rough reality. Even the potentially dreary account of how the explorers spent the long Antarctic winter has novelty and variety of interest. The struggles of scientists to carry on their work under the most distressful conditions, bouts with the blizzard and with whirlwinds of extraordinary violence and mischievousness, the incidents of a cheerful home life carried on amid an abomination of desolation, lack neither excitement nor human appeal. Yet it may be said without disparaging the importance of the expedition's work or the impressiveness of its experiences, that the narrative contained in *The Home of the Blizzard* is inordinately long and somewhat monotonous. Sir Douglas has been fairly merciless in including everything. There is somewhat too much, for instance, of that kind of humor, approaching the fatuous, to which strong and intelligent men may be brought by the pressure of oppressive surroundings. There is, indeed, a little too much of everything. The work, which is composed of narratives from several hands, more or less edited and welded together, presumes on the part of the reader a persistent and all-embracing interest such as perhaps no one could feel who had not personally participated in the events related. And the surplus matter does not consist in the main of the sort of information that is useful for reference;

indeed, the more technical scientific details have been withheld (properly enough) for publication in another form. One hopes, therefore, that *The Home of the Blizzard* will eventually be condensed and re-edited.

A feature of the work that deserves especial mention is its numerous and excellent illustrations, including reproductions in color of paintings, and reproductions of photographs both in color and in black and white. All are of striking interest in subject; none are unsatisfactory from want of clearness or of detail; and many are really beautiful.

SAMUEL F. B. MORSE: HIS LETTERS AND JOURNALS. Edited and Supplemented by his son, Edward Lind Morse. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914.

The inventor of the telegraph—that is the first and perhaps the only thought that occurs to most persons when the name of Morse is mentioned. Even though one may happen to know that the inventor had been for many years a painter before he became absorbed in the development and promotion of his great idea, one hardly realizes that Morse had two separate careers, each of which was successful and well rounded; that his first forty years contained enough accomplishment and interesting experience to constitute a life-history as affording as that of many notable men.

“My aim,” writes Edward Lind Morse, in his preface, “has been to give, through characteristic letters and contemporary opinions, an accurate portrait of the man, and a succinct history of his life and labors.” In this modest attempt he has more than succeeded. The most characteristic and significant parts of Samuel F. B. Morse’s journals and correspondence he seems to have selected with honesty and wisdom. He has explained and supplemented in just the right degree, and he has urged his father’s claims to greatness with forceful moderation. In the work of preparing a biography of permanent value and interest, he has been aided in an unusual degree by the excellence of the materials at his disposal. Morse’s letters are in general distinguished by a kind of historic lucidity; they are peculiarly satisfying, too, in that they are for the most part self-interpretative and convincing, needing no apology and requiring but little comment or explanation. In reading them, one is intrigued not so much by the fascination of what is called “strong personality” as by the deeper and more wholesome attraction of strong character—by a breadth of view, a sense of proportion, and a restraint which impart to Morse’s letters the most fundamental of literary qualities. Nor are these letters by any means deficient in the charm of familiar correspondence. Despite a certain formality of epistolary style common to the period in which they were written, lively interest, personal enthusiasm, individual taste, everywhere shine through them. Especially in the letters written during the first part of Morse’s career, there is found that note